GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:341
ANSWERED ON:23.12.2015
Rural Telephony
Laguri Smt. Sakuntala;Patil Shri Bheemrao Baswanthrao

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of urban and rural households in India which do not have access to a phone as yet, State-wise;

(b) whether the expansion of telecom services in rural, backward, tribal and hilly regions is slow as compared to urban areas and if so, the details thereof, State-wise and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government has fixed any target to provide telephone facilities to every household especially in rural and inaccessible areas and if so, the measures taken for expansion of telecom services in low penetrated areas and States; and

(d) the funds allocated for the purpose during the last three years and the current year, State and year-wise?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

(a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

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STATEMENT TO BE LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA IN RESPECT OF PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.341 FOR 23rd DECEMBER, 2015 REGARDING "RURAL TELEPHONY".

(a) & (b) The Department does not maintain the data on households' access to telephones, but tele-density can be taken as a good indicator of penetration of telephony in the country. The current level of rural and urban tele-density in the country is 48.79 and 152.36 respectively (as on 30.09.2015). The State-wise details are at Annexure I.

5,41,939 villages out of total 5,97,608 villages in the country are already covered with mobile services, leaving only 55,669 villages, i.e., 9.31%, without coverage. (State-wise details of uncovered villages are Annexure-II). Since the demand of telecom services is price sensitive, the level of tele-density is also determined by the purchasing ability of the consumers. The increase in rural tele-density has gathered momentum in recent times but the wide gap between rural and urban tele-density can be explained by the difference in purchasing power of rural and urban consumers.

(c) Although no year to year target has been fixed for the expansion of telecom services, the National Telecom Policy has set the objectives of increasing rural tele-density to 70 percent by 2017 and 100 percent by 2020. The Department has taken several measures for expansion and improvement of telecommunication services in rural and remote areas as given below:

(i) On 10.09.2014, the Government approved a proposal to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region (NER). The Project envisages providing mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages by installation of about 6673 mobile towers, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the NER. The estimated cost of implementation is Rs. 5336.18 crore. The Project would be funded from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

(ii) 2199 mobile towers are being set up in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States with a total estimated cost of Rs.3567.58 crore. 1134 mobile towers are radiating as on 30.11.2015.

(iii) Telecom Commission has given 'in principle' approval on 07.11.2014 for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with a total estimated investment of Rs. 221.05 crores.

(iv) BharatNet / National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) is planned to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country through optical fibre utilizing existing fibers of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) viz. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), RailTel and Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) and laying incremental fibre wherever necessary for providing broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats. As on 30.11.2015, 1,03,643 km of duct and 74,994 km of optical fibre cable covering 32,049 Gram Panchayats have been laid.

(d) State-wise details of funds allocated and utilized for expansion of telecom services under various schemes implemented by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) are enclosed as Annexure-III.